

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 8937

EXDIS

FOR SHLAUDEMAN FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PE CH BL PINT
SUBJECT: DETERRING A PERUVIAN ATTACK ON ITS NEIGHBORS

REF: A) CARACAS 14758 B) STATE 310852 C) LIMA 11579

1. I FIND PETE VAKY'S ANALYSIS IN REFTEL A TO BE RIGHT ON THE MARK. IF THE PERUVIANS ARE CONTEMPLATING AN ATTACK THEY WILL HAVE ALREADY DISCOUNTED THE ADVERSE EFFECT ON FOREIGN PUBLIC OPINION. THEY ALSO WILL HAVE PROBABLY CALCULATED THAT ONCE THEY ARE IN OCCUPATION OF CHILEAN AND ECUADOREAN TERRITORY IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO DISLODGE THEM, AS EVIDENCED BY ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF THE SINAI AND THE WEST BANK.

2. A CRUCIAL ELEMENT THAT I FIND MISSING IN PETE'S ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, IS THE NATURE OF THE US WARNING TO PERU. I AGREE
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WITH HIM THAT THE ONLY REAL DETERRENT TO PERU WILL BE THE THREAT OF FORCE. IF SO, THEN WE MUST ASK OURSELVES WHETHER WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE SUCH A THREAT AND, HAVING MADE IT, WHETHER IT IS CREDIBLE. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE PAX AMERICANA IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE HAS BEEN BADLY ERODED OVER THE PAST DECADE AND THERE MUST BE REAL DOUBTS

IN THE MINDS OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS SITUATION THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD STAND FOR A FOREIGN EXPEDITION TO TRY TO SETTLE A LOCALIZED ARMED CONFLICT.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE UNITED STATES HAS NEVER PUBLICLY RENOUNCED ITS HEGEMONY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THERE PROBABLY STILL IS A STRONGER FEELING IN THE MINDS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE TO OUR SECURITY THAN THERE EVER WAS IN THE CASES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND, MORE RECENTLY, AFRICA. WE ALSO HAVE A COLLECTIVE SECURITY MECHANISM WHICH IS STILL INTACT IN THIS HEMISPHERE AND, WHICH WHILE IT MIGHT BE A THIN REED FOR DIRECT US ARMED INTERVENTION, STILL PROVIDES US WITH A RATIONALE FOR BECOMING INVOLVED IN THIS SITUATION.

4. I REALIZE THAT IN TALKING TO THE PERUVIANS IT MIGHT BE BEST TO LEAVE AMBIGUOUS THE NATURE OF A US REACTION RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO SPELL IT OUT CLEARLY. BUT I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD NOT BE OVERLY FUZZY ABOUT THE POSSIBLE NATURE OF OUR RESPONSE AND THEREFORE THAT WE SHOULD HAVE A VERY CLEAR IDEA IN OUR OWN MIND WHAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DO IN THE EVENTUALITY OF A PERUVIAN ATTACK. WE MIGHT START BY CONSIDERING ECONOMIC SANCTIONS WHICH, IF THEY WERE TO INVOLVE PERU'S TRADE, COULD HAVE A DEVASTATING EFFECT ON THE PERUVIAN ECONOMY. THE NEXT STEP, OF COURSE, WOULD BE SOME FORM OF ARMED INTERVENTION, WHICH MIGHT BE CONTINGENT UPON PARTICIPATION OF THE CUBANS AND SOVIETS. THE LATTER STEP, OF COURSE, WOULD PRESENT THE ADMINISTRATION--WHETHER OUTGOING OR INCOMING--WITH THE GRAVEST OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS VIS-A-VIS THE CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC.
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POSSIBLY, ECONOMIC STRANGULATION WOULD BE ENOUGH OF A DETERRENT.

5. INCIDENTALLY, WHILE I WOULD AGREE WITH EMBASSY LIMA'S ASSESSMENT IN PARA 3 OF REFTTEL C THAT IT WOULD BE COMPLETELY IRRATIONAL FOR THE MORALES-BERMUDEZ GOVERNMENT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN A WAR WITH ITS NEIGHBORS, I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THIS WHOLE MATTER HAS HIGHLY IRRATIONAL ROOTS. ONCE TENSION REACHES A CERTAIN POINT IT CAN TAKE A VERY SMALL INCIDENT INDEED TO SET OFF A PREEMPTIVE ATTACK OF THE KIND THAT THE PERUVIANS MAY BE CONTEMPLATING.
BLOOMFIELD

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